

Priorities of Government – What is it?

The “Priorities of Government” budget approach helps guide budget decisions by producing a results-based prioritization of state activities.

The POG Process

The process starts by identifying the **priorities of government**: in this case, 10 key results citizens expect from government.

- Each result was assigned a team of experts from different agencies, led by staff from the Governor’s budget or policy office.
- These teams present their work at a series of tollgate meetings with the Guidance Team – a group of executives from state and local government and private and non-profit sector organizations. The Guidance Team makes sure the work of the teams stays result and citizen-focused.

Result Teams first **identify key indicators of success**. How would citizens know if we are making progress toward the high-level results?

Next they **identify proven or promising strategies for achieving results**. What does our experience and research tell us about the factors most critical to success?

Teams have access to the **activity inventory** – a catalog of the discrete activities of state government described in a citizen-oriented way.

- What do we do; for whom; why; what does it cost; what do we expect to accomplish?

Each team receives a **dollar allocation** that serves as a constraint to their purchase plan.

- The prioritization process is often more meaningful when the allocation is less than the amount currently spent in that result area.
- A dollar constraint encourages creativity, keeps proposals grounded in financial reality, and forces people to articulate priorities and choices.

The teams then **develop a results-based prioritization of activities** – Given the available resources, what are the most important activities to buy to achieve results?

- Teams are asked to focus only on maximizing results for citizens through evidenced-based strategies, and to ignore fund source and statutory restrictions that stand in the way.
 - When they’ve exhausted their allocation, they list the items they would buy back next, in priority order.
 - Conceptually, for each result you end up a list of prioritized activities with “purchases” above the line and potential buy-backs below the line.
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Key benefits of this POG framework

- Helps keep focus on contribution to results – lets us escape agency “silos” and consider statewide strategies.
 - Makes performance information more relevant to budget choices.
 - Facilitates thinking about trade-offs above and below the line and across the results areas. Does the budget make sense as a whole?
 - Helps frame the questions, “Why does the line have to be drawn here? Can we make things above the line cost less? Are we sure we’re buying things at the best price?”
 - Shows the “keeps” as well as the “cuts.”
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Note: POG is not the actual budget. It’s what the budget might look like if the only objective were to maximize results to citizens. It helps build a better budget within the complex real world and helps identify barriers that need to be removed to build an even better one.